

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

November 29, 2010

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Secretary Clinton on Second Anniversary of Mumbai Terrorist Attacks

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 24, 2010

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CLINTON

Second Anniversary of the Mumbai Terrorist Attacks

As the people of the United States gather with family to celebrate Thanksgiving, we pause to remember the horrific attack on innocent men, women, and children that occurred in Mumbai two years ago. Now, as then, the American people stand in solidarity with the people of India and honor those who lost their lives. President Obama's recent visit to India underscored our nations' shared belief in liberty, democracy, and mutual respect for all people. As the people of Mumbai gather in temples, mosques, churches, gurdwaras, and synagogues to honor those who perished on November 26, 2008, they send a message of resolve, resilience, and mutual respect that is far louder and more powerful than any terrorist's guns and bombs.

U.S. Statement on Tonga's First Parliamentary Election

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 25, 2010

STATEMENT BY PHILIP J. CROWLEY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tonga's First Popular Majority Parliamentary Election

The United States congratulates the government and the people of Tonga on today's historic elections, and commends His Majesty King George Tupou V for his committed efforts to bring about genuine democratic reform. Today's election of the nation's first popular majority parliament marks a watershed moment for the Tongan people, clearly demonstrating that the democratic value of people having a say in their own government applies across cultures and regions.

The United States applauds the Tongan people as they advance further on their democratic journey, and looks forward to continuing and strengthening its engagement with the government of Tonga and its citizens.

State Recognized with Heritage Award for International Excellence

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
November 24, 2010

MEDIA NOTE

U.S. Department of State's Cultural Heritage Center Recognized with Heritage Award for International Excellence

The U.S. National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) has recognized the U.S. Department of State's Cultural Heritage Center with the first annual Heritage Award for International Excellence. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Ann Stock received the award on behalf of the Cultural Heritage Center on November 9th at a dinner and ceremony at the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC.

The award recognizes organizations, programs, projects, individuals, and publications that exemplify worldwide excellence in the protection, revitalization, or interpretation of the world's historic monuments and sites; or that educate the public about global heritage or otherwise further the goals of the World Heritage Convention.

As part of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Heritage Center supports the foreign affairs functions of the U.S. Department of State that relate to the preservation of cultural heritage. Serving as a source of expertise on global cultural heritage protection issues, the Cultural Heritage Center administers the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, the Iraq Cultural Heritage Initiative, and special cultural heritage programs. The Center also administers U.S. responsibilities relating to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Assistant Secretary Stock, in conveying the US/ICOMOS award to Cultural Heritage Center Director Maria Kouroupas and her staff, also presented a Certificate of Appreciation from Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who cited the positive impact of the Center's work and of the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation: "Congratulations on the 10th anniversary of the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. This marvelous program has made a lasting contribution to America's efforts to preserve the common heritage of humanity. On a recent trip to Cambodia, I had the pleasure of visiting Angkor Archaeological Park, where

the Ambassadors Fund is supporting a project to help preserve the 10th-century Phnom Bakheng Temple, one of the greatest cultural achievements of the Khmer Kingdom. Your professional and personal dedication to cultural heritage is both commendable and inspirational."

Kenyan Doctor Saves Lives Through AIDS Research, Outreach

By Burton Bollag
Special Correspondent

Washington — With a mix of fierce dedication and a practical, results-based approach, Dr. Frederick Sawe has shown that much can be done in sub-Saharan Africa to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS. Sawe is deputy director of the Kenya Medical Research Institute/Walter Reed Project HIV Program, a prevention, research and treatment project run jointly by his home country of Kenya and the U.S. military's international HIV program.

Based in the town of Kericho, in the southern Rift Valley region, the program is one of the country's most comprehensive initiatives against HIV infection, which causes AIDS. Funding comes from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a U.S. government program established in 2003.

The program has registered more than half of the estimated 100,000 people infected with HIV in the region of 2.5 million. A little less than half of those infected receive anti-retroviral medication — a treatment that has turned the once deadly illness into a treatable condition. The others — infected, but healthy — undergo regular checkups and are put on the medicines if their health starts deteriorating. To bring care close to where patients live, medicines are provided at 347 local public health facilities throughout the region.

The program provides a level of care considerably better than what is available in many other parts of Africa. For example, the program reaches a large majority of the region's pregnant women to counter the risk of their infecting their infants. Last year, 84,000 of the region's 100,000 pregnant women were tested for HIV infection. Those who tested positive receive counseling and inexpensive medicines to prevent transmission of the virus to their newborns.

Sawe said the program follows procedures that researchers have demonstrated are pretty effective in preventing mother-to-child transmission of the virus. "There is really no reason for childhood HIV cases," Sawe said.

Sawe's program has improved the effectiveness of the widely used treatment. Research he co-authored that was

published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that a combination of drugs — ideally administered regularly from the 14th week of pregnancy — is much more effective and safe for the mother than the single dose of the inexpensive drug nevirapine during labor. This method has been used since its development in 1999 by researchers in Uganda. The treatment also avoids the risk of the mother building up a resistance to nevirapine and compromising future treatments.

Another focus of Sawe's program has been reducing the transmission of the virus by prostitutes. Those "infecting the most people are the commercial sex workers," Sawe said.

Typically, prostitutes and some others who might have been exposed to the virus have felt embarrassed to go to a clinic to be tested. So Sawe started a campaign of "moonlight HIV testing and counseling." After a radio and leaflet ad campaign, health workers spent several nights on the streets of "red light" districts, offering testing and education on safe sex. In many areas, Sawe said, 50 percent of prostitutes tested positive.

"We teach them to use condoms, and how to negotiate with clients [for safe sex]," said Sawe. "For example, some now charge double for having sex without a condom."

One of the goals of Sawe's program is to train local health workers "so that people see their sons and daughters rather than some strangers" providing treatment. This is essential to winning the support of the population, Sawe said.

The program is also developing and testing new treatments and vaccines. The search for a vaccine against HIV received a major boost last year when, for the first time, a vaccine formula being tested in Thailand was shown to be partially effective.

The recently released annual report of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS also had some good news. As a result of prevention and treatment programs around the world, at least 56 countries have stabilized or reduced the number of new HIV infections.

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